

Khrushchev, LBJ Shared Problem

By Drew Pearson

There are some interesting similarities between the military debate now taking place inside the Kremlin and inside Washington; also some important differences.

On Aug. 17 last year, Nikita Khrushchev made a statement in an interview with me which, in retrospect, is extremely important to U.S.-Soviet relations, and may have contributed to his downfall.

He said that, regardless of the United States and regardless of the disarmament talks in Geneva, he was going to proceed with cutting the Russian military budget. He was not going to cut the firepower of the Soviet Union—in other words, missiles—but he was going to cut the fat.

"Communism cannot be a table laid with empty plates," said Khrushchev. "To invite people to that brand of communism is like inviting people to eat soup with a fork."

On Dec. 13, four months later, Khrushchev did cut the Russian military budget by 4.7 per cent. Earlier that week, President Johnson, who had just taken office, announced

a cut of the American military budget by 30 surplus bases and 75,000 in civilian defense personnel.

Both announcements led to political trouble. And when all the arguments were over, the author of one announcement was out of office, the other was re-elected by the largest margin in American history.

Cost of Antipoverty

Despite this difference, the essential problem of Nikita Khrushchev and Lyndon Johnson was the same: Both wanted to help improve the living standards of their people, both had antipoverty programs. And the only way they could pay for it was by cutting the huge expenditures of their two military establishments.

Khrushchev had fought a running battle with the Red Army, the old Stalinists, and to some extent the Red Chinese, in favor of putting a higher standard of living ahead of hard-core communism.

He had announced in 1960 a cut of 1,000,000 from the Red Army, plus 200,000 officers. But he had to backtrack, partly because of Red Army opposition, partly because John F. Kennedy in 1961 began beefing up American troops in West Germany.

What Mr. Kennedy didn't

realize at the time he was ordering two important increases in U.S. bomber strength and shipping 50,000 extra troops to Germany was that Khrushchev was having an internal battle with his military leaders. And Mr. Kennedy's increases cut the ground out from under Khrushchev.

Later, Khrushchev fired his army chief of staff and his chief of intelligence, but he couldn't fire Marshal Malinovsky, his Minister of Defense.

Last month, Malinovsky, though not a member, sat on the Presidium that voted to oust Khrushchev. And last week, Malinovsky made a bellicose speech at the Kremlin reception celebrating the 47th anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution—so bellicose that it was censored by Pravda.

LBJ's "Malinovsky"

Meanwhile, President Johnson, following his December announcement of defense cuts, was also having his troubles, not from the military but from the politicians. His No. 1 critic, of course, was Barry Goldwater. Time after time during the election campaign, Goldwater claimed LBJ was dangerously weakening the Nation's defenses, goaded him especially on reducing manned bomber strength.

Goldwater had been in touch with Gen. Curtis Le-

May, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, who bluntly disagreed with Mr. Johnson on bomber reduction. But LeMay was alone.

Other American military men, unlike the Red Army, stuck by their civilian Commander-in-Chief and his cuts of military surplus.

Mr. Johnson also had other political opposition—not all of it Republican. Two days after the election, Bobby Kennedy, newly elected Senator from New York, came scooting down to Washington to ask that the Brooklyn Navy Yard, listed for possible scrapping, be kept open.

However, Mr. Johnson has had one asset Khrushchev did not have—a tough civilian Secretary of Defense. Robert McNamara held his ground, listened patiently to the protests against military cutbacks, then went ahead with those he considered wise. He knew Mr. Johnson had to pay for his antipoverty program, his education program, and that he could get the money only by cutting military surplus.

Malinovsky, the career army man who opposed the cutbacks, helped to put the skids under Mr. Johnson's opposite number. However, the new leaders of the Kremlin have made it clear that they plan to follow a co-existence policy with the U.S. regardless of Malinovsky.

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